



SUMTER SCHOOL DISTRICT

1345 Wilson Hall Road • PO Drawer 2039 • Sumter, South Carolina 29151-2039 • (T) 803.469.6900 • (F) 803.469.3769

September 7, 2023

Re: Initial Parent Notification

Dear Third Grade Parent/Guardian:

The South Carolina Read to Succeed Act became law in 2014. The intent of Read to Succeed is to ensure all students have the reading skills necessary to become college and career ready. Read to Succeed includes significant changes regarding the promotion and retention of third grade students.

Section 59-155-160 of Read to Succeed states:

“... a student must be retained in the third grade if the student fails to demonstrate reading proficiency at the end of the third grade as indicated by scoring at the lowest achievement level on the state summative reading assessment that equates to Not Met 1 on the South Carolina College and Career Ready Assessment (SC READY).”

Though there are a number of exceptions to this requirement in Read to Succeed, please be assured that our school district's goal is that all students will be proficient readers by the end of third grade. Actions to improve student success include additional instructional time devoted to literacy, small group and individualized instruction, and classroom teachers' receiving specialized literacy training and support from school-based literacy coaches.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact your school's principal or the below-listed contact in our district office. You may also find information about the Read to Succeed Act on the South Carolina Department of Education website at <http://ed.sc.gov/instruction/office-of-early-learning-and-literacy1/>

Thank you.

Mrs. Stephanie Gregg, EdS
Lemira Elementary School



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This information is for parents of South Carolina's third-grade students. It is designed to help parents understand what South Carolina's Read to Succeed says about reading requirements for third grade students and promotion to fourth grade. It also describes what the school will do to help children who are reading below grade level.



Read to Succeed

BACKGROUND

Reading and comprehension are the foundations for all academic learning. Walk into any in kindergarten, first, second, or third grade classroom and you will find students learning to read. Students may be talking about the sounds letters make, listening to the teacher read a story, reading aloud together, or talking and writing about what they have read. Reading is the core of the school day for young children because students need strong reading skills to learn in all other school subjects, such as science, social studies, writing, and even math.

THE LAW

Section 59-155-160 of Read to Succeed states, "... a student must be retained in the third grade if the student fails to demonstrate reading proficiency at the end of the third grade as indicated by scoring at the lowest achievement level on the state summative reading assessment that equates to Not Met 1 on the South Carolina College and Career Ready Assessment (SC READY.)

GOOD CAUSE EXEMPTIONS

Some students with disabilities, limited English proficiency, and those who have been previously retained can receive a "good cause exemption" and be promoted to the fourth grade even if they are not reading at the required level. Other good cause exemptions exist for students who scored poorly on the state summative assessment, but who have demonstrated grade-level reading proficiency on other tests or through a reading portfolio.

EXPECTATIONS FOR THIRD GRADERS

The specific skills that students need in reading are described in the South Carolina College- and Career-Ready (SCCCR) Standards. Designed by stakeholders in South Carolina, the SCCCR Standards outline what students should know and be able to do at the end of each grade level. By the end of third grade, students are expected to be able to read independently and comprehend a variety of texts. This means they can read and understand words, sentences, and paragraphs without help. Third grade students should become self-directed, critical thinkers and readers.

WHY THIRD GRADE?

According to the 2013 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), only thirty-five percent of the nation's fourth grade students are reading on grade level. A substantial reading deficiency must be addressed before students can move on to the more difficult schoolwork required in fourth grade and beyond when textbooks become more complex and reading passages are longer. Those who have trouble understanding what they read find it very difficult to keep up. Many students become frustrated when they try to tackle this schoolwork without independent reading skills. For some students, this leads to years of difficulty in school and limited opportunities in college and career.



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AR IKE-R Promotion, Retention, and Acceleration of Students

Issued 8/21

Philosophy

We believe each student will be provided maximum opportunities to achieve at least on grade-level competency in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies.

The curriculum will enable all students to make continuous progress at each grade level. When the retention of a student is necessary, the decision will be made on the basis of achievement and grade-level competency as measured by state identified tests, attendance record, and judgment of educators.

The philosophy of this policy applies to all students who are in the regular school program. Students functioning in the special education programs are governed by their individual education plans (IEP). This policy will be administered fairly, equitably, and consistently in the schools. The policy will establish on grade-level mastery of skills as mandated by the State Board of Education (SCDE) and as identified in the South Carolina standards.

Promotion

Kindergarten through grade two

All kindergarten through grade two students are expected to learn the South Carolina state standards. Students must be recommended for promotion by the classroom teacher based on proficient classroom performance. Kindergarten through grade two retentions are generally not recommended. However, there may be an occasion when formal and informal assessments indicate that a student is not developmentally ready for promotion and would benefit from more time, instruction, and nurturing at this level. The teacher will confer with the principal on the retention. A conference must be held with the teacher, principal, and parent/legal guardian of the student to discuss the retention. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis involving parent/legal guardian, teacher, principal, and district administrator as needed or indicated.

Elementary level (grades three to five)

Mastery of reading/language arts and mathematics will be based on teacher-made tests, samples of assigned work, and grade-level comprehensive tests. In grades three to five, district and/or state identified grade-level tests will be considered in determining promotion, academic probation, or retention. In order to be promoted to the next grade level, a student must meet the following criteria.

Reading

Completion and mastery of grade-level reading/language arts standards and a yearly passing average of 60 percent including teacher-made assessments, culminating assessments, and grade-level comprehensive tests.

Mathematics

Completion and mastery of grade-level reading/language arts standards and a yearly passing average of 60 percent including teacher-made assessments, culminating assessments and grade-level



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comprehensive tests.

Additional promotion requirements

In addition to mastery of reading and mathematics grade-level standards, students must also maintain an overall passing average in grades three through five science and social studies and meet attendance requirements to be considered for promotion.

Read to Succeed State-Mandated Retention

Early in the school year and/or when a third grade student transfers into a district or school, parents/legal guardians will be given a general notice regarding the requirements for promotion and retention.

Retention conference

During the second grading period of the third grade, parents/legal guardians of students that are not demonstrating third-grade reading proficiency will be notified in writing that their child is being considered for retention. A parent/teacher conference will be scheduled and held, at which time the conference participants will review the student's intensive instruction and intervention plan. Within two weeks following the parent/teacher conference, copies of the plan will be provided to the principal, parent/legal guardian, teacher, and other school personnel who are working with the child on literacy.

If a parent/legal guardian is unable to attend the conference after two varied attempts at contact, the parent/legal guardian should be mailed a copy of the student's intensive instruction and intervention plan.

An additional parent/teacher conference will be held during the third nine-week grading period for students still being considered for retention.

Retention determination

The principal, classroom teacher, and other school personnel who are working with the child on literacy will review the recommendation for retention and provide suggestions for supplemental instruction. Recommendations and observations of the principal, teacher, parent/legal guardian, and other school personnel who are working with the student on literacy will be considered when determining whether to retain the student.

If it is determined that retention is appropriate, the student may be eligible to enroll in a summer reading camp provided by the district. District summer reading camps will be operated in accordance with the guidelines provided by the SCDE. Parents/Legal guardians may elect to opt their child out of participation in summer reading camp, with the understanding that the child will be unable to qualify for a good cause exemption on that ground. Information regarding the summer camp will be provided by the school or can be requested from the district office.

Good cause exemption determinations

To request an exemption for good cause, the teacher of a student identified as potentially meeting one of the state-approved exemptions will submit documentation to the principal on the proposed exemption



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and include evidence that promotion of the student is appropriate based on the student's academic record. This evidence will be limited to the student's IEP, alternative assessments, or student reading portfolio.

The principal will review the documentation and determine whether the student should be promoted. If the principal determines the student should be promoted, the principal will submit a written recommendation for promotion to the superintendent for final determination.

The superintendent will determine whether a student may be exempted from the mandatory retention policy. The superintendent's acceptance or rejection of the principal's recommendation will be in writing and a copy will be provided to the child's parent/legal guardian.

Good cause exemption determinations for students with disabilities

A third grade student with disabilities will be exempt from the mandatory retention policy if the student is eligible to take a South Carolina alternative assessment and receives instruction aligned to the state's alternative achievement standards, or the student has received intensive remediation in reading for more than two years.

To demonstrate intensive remediation in reading, there must be:

- documentation that the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance have resulted in one or more annual goals and that the student received specialized instruction and/or related services in the area of reading for two or more years
- documentation of intensive general education interventions in the area of reading for two or more years
- a combination of special education services and intensive general education intervention in the area of reading for two or more years

Any evidence submitted to document intensive remediation or evidence-based interventions will be in addition to the student's 90 minutes of daily reading and writing instruction as required by law.

Appeal of a retention determination

A parent/legal guardian may appeal the decision to retain a student to the district superintendent if there is a compelling reason why the student should not be retained. To initiate an appeal, the parent/legal guardian must notify the superintendent in writing within two weeks after receiving the notification of the retention decision. The letter must be addressed to the superintendent and must include the reasons why the student should not be retained. The superintendent will render a final, written decision and provide copies to the parent/legal guardian and the principal.

Appointment of an education advocate

Parents/Legal guardians are permitted to designate another person as an education advocate to act on their behalf to receive notification of their child's level of reading proficiency and to assume the responsibility of promoting the reading success of the child. Parents/Legal guardians interested in appointing such an advocate should contact the principal in writing to make their request.



Administrative Office

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Third Grade Retention Initial Notification

Please sign below and return this page to your child's teacher.

I acknowledge that I have read and am aware of reading requirements for third grade students and for promotion to fourth grade. I am also aware of what the school will do to help children who are reading below grade level.

Student Name (**PRINTED**) _____

3rd Grade Teacher _____

School _____

Parent/Guardian Name (**PRINTED**) _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____

Date _____